

Cuadrilla Vitale (Para mÃ- no quiero)

visible

Project author or developer:
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Where:
UY / Uruguay / Montevideo

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A project part of the wider research Â« Living together: The artist as a neighbour Â» : reconstituting the public image of a neighborhood

Guillermo Vitale (1907-1992) found art late in life, or perhaps it was art that found him. He dropped a bathroom tile whilst doing repairs in his house and in the pieces scattered on the floor, he discovered his vocation. It is perhaps a fortuitous paradox that a pensioner with impoverished eyesight was destined to create the most exquisite visual representation of community life in Cerro - a spirited neighbourhood of the Uruguayan capital, Montevideo. Until his death - aged 85 - he created over 100 mosaics commemorating community heroes of international and local fame. He built playgrounds with recycled materials, collected signatures to petition the authorities to grant his neighbourhood independent status as a city, gardened the roadside entries to Cerro and was known to everybody as an expert in local history, forever pushing a wheelbarrow loaded with the materials of his art. This project seeks to preserve and reinvigorate Vitale's legacy as emblematic of Cerro, through a conceptual community art project that will bring together a significant cross-section of the community with artists, researchers, and cultural institutions. Through collaborative and participatory processes, this "Vitale Crew" will devise and implement a collective strategy for the preservation of Vitale's legacy and its deployment as a radical tool for grassroots-led regeneration. Work to reconstitute the public image of the neighborhood, contesting media and mainstream stigmatising of the area as marginal and dangerous. Implicate a younger generation of Cerences in the cultural life of their neighbourhood, both as custodians of its heritage and as active creators of new community narratives of generosity and civic service. This project is part of my practice-based Doctoral research entitled Living together: The artist as a neighbour. This research documents, describes and analyses the political efficacy and effects of community-based art practice, where the artist has a long-term relationship based on a biographical link with the communities that the work addresses and engages. Cuadrilla Vitale is the third and last art project of this research, and signals my permanent relocation to my hometown after 20 years of exile. The project will follow a work process developed over more than 10 years working with people from all walks of life in community-based art projects. My methodology is informed by permaculture ethics and principles, feminist theory and human geography research, and uses the skills and techniques of community organizing and grassroots cultural activism. At the heart of my practice is a belief in the political importance of self-organised cultural production situated at a local level. I work from the position that the overlapping and sometimes conflicting communities attached to a particular place are the central core from where the ideas and outcomes of any project emerge and should be of primary benefit to.

